

PLANNING REF : 250543
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 58
: Woodward Close, Winnersh, Berkshire
: RG41 5UU
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Syed Raza Shahid
DATE SUBMITTED : 02/04/2025

COMMENTS:

Please note that before submitting my comments, I have spent time reviewing relevant documents pertaining to the request for permission to change the use of a building, along with various supporting and opposing comments. Overall, I find myself in agreement with both sides of the argument. It is clear that there is significant support for the provision of a place for worship and religious education, and I have no doubt that this is an essential need. However, the concerns raised about parking and congestion are equally valid. With that in mind, I would like to focus on the second part of the debate, as I strongly support the idea of providing communities with their own place for worship and education.

My family and I recently moved to Winnersh from Marlow (SL7), where we spent 18 years. The nearest mosques were in Maidenhead and High Wycombe, both approximately 10 minutes away in theory. However, I regularly attended Friday afternoon prayers, which took around one hour for both the journey there and back. Marlow had very little Muslim population, so the traffic I faced when travelling to these mosques was largely unrelated to religious services but due to roadworks, tourist traffic, and school congestion, which also made me late to pick up my children from school.

I would also like to draw attention to the value of having schools located within residential catchment areas. This approach reduces traffic, encourages walking, particularly among children, and facilitates greater interaction between parents. Our home is located next to Wheatfield Primary School, and during drop-off and pick-up times, we observe the usual congestion, including cars parked on yellow lines. However, this is a temporary situation, lasting only 15-20 minutes, and we have found that parents are generally considerate of the residents of Woodward Close. As a gesture of goodwill, we have offered our driveway to parents traveling from farther locations.

Similarly, the nearest mosques to Winnersh and Wokingham Town are currently about 15 minutes away, either towards Upper Earley or Bracknell. In practice, it takes much longer to reach these locations. Moreover, consider the environmental impact: the pollution generated by Muslims traveling to distant places of worship or education multiple times a day is significant. For this reason, I strongly advocate for the establishment of a mosque within the Winnersh and Wokingham Town catchment areas, given the growing Muslim population here.

I have also reviewed public transport options, which are quite comprehensive for this location. While providing large parking spaces may be an option, it will not address the fundamental issue of traffic congestion, as many Muslims will still need to travel to

their place of worship frequently. Fortunately, the proposed location is situated in an industrial area, which seems to be an ideal choice in my opinion, particularly for late-night prayers during summer, as it is less likely to disturb residential areas.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support this application. The proposed site is well-suited for the catchment area of Winnersh and Wokingham Town, considering the significant Muslim population. It will encourage people to walk or use public transport, which promotes a healthier environment and facilitates better community interaction. However, should additional parking be required, it may be possible to lease spaces from nearby businesses and offices, which could also generate funds for those businesses.